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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 003321

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TAGS: [IZ](#) [MARR](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREF](#) [PTER](#)

SUBJECT: FOURTH TURKEY-IRAQ-U.S. TRILATERAL MINISTERIAL

REF: A. 08 BAGHDAD 3710 B. BAGHDAD 1018 C. BAGHDAD
2071 D. ANKARA 1755 E. ANKARA 1764 F.
ANKARA 1792

Classified By: Acting Pol-Mil Counselor W.S. Reid for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) This cable has an action request, please see paragraph 11.

¶2. (C) Summary: The fourth ministerial meeting of the Turkey-Iraq-U.S. trilateral security dialogue was held in Baghdad on December 20. The Turkish delegation also had a meeting with MNF-I CG immediately following the meeting. The Turkish and Iraqi delegations traveled to Erbil and met with KRG President, Prime Minister and Minister of Interior on December 21. In the December 20 plenary opening remarks, all parties emphasized the need for continued cooperation and coordination to combat the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK). Minister Atalay outlined the GoT's new "National Unity Project." The plenary discussions otherwise centered around the recent accomplishments of the trilateral working group, the trilateral intelligence sharing office (TISO) in Erbil, Makhmour camp, training and an upcoming border assessment visit to the common point of entry in January. According to open sources, KRG President Barzani expressed his support for the GoT's new initiative and expressed hope that Turkey and Iraq would work together to resolve the PKK issue.

¶3. (C) The pressure from the GoT to hastily plan and execute the ministerial suggests that the trilateral meeting was not the main Turkish objective. Based on reporting from Embassy Ankara and Atalay's recent comments to the press, the trip to Erbil and meeting with senior KRG leadership in order to gain support for the GoT's new initiative was the primary aim. Previous meetings and discussion saw hesitant and doubtful participation from the Turkish General Staff (TGS), however, this meeting demonstrated that the whole of government approach to combat the PKK is being adapted by much of the GoT to include kinetic options aimed at PKK leadership and hard-liners in the Qandil mountains. End summary.

¶4. (C) The fourth ministerial meeting of the Turkey-Iraq-U.S. trilateral security dialogue took place in Baghdad on December 20 with a follow-on visit by the Turkish and Iraqi delegations to Erbil on December 21. Per a request by the Turkish delegation, they also met with MNF-I Commanding General Ray Odierno immediately following the plenary session in Baghdad. Both the Turkish and Iraqi delegations were headed by the same ministers that have led their respective delegations at previous ministerial meetings. Minister of Interior Besir Atalay led the Turkish delegation and Minister of State for National Security Affairs Sherwan al-Waili led the Iraqi delegation. The U.S. delegation was led by Acting Pol-Mil Counselor Scott Reid.

The previous ministerial meetings were held in Ankara on July 28 (ref C), Baghdad on April 11 (ref B) and Baghdad on November 19, 2008 (ref A). The agenda for the meeting included a review of the accomplishments of both the trilateral working group and TISO in Erbil, Makhmour refugee camp, training and an upcoming border assessment visit.

MINISTERIAL MEETING IN BAGHDAD

15. (C) The meeting began with opening remarks from all three delegation leads. Minister Waili stated that Iraq enjoyed its good relationship with Turkey and stressed that work needed to continue to combat the PKK and resolve the Makhmour refugee issue. Waili lauded continued progress at the working group level and thanked both the U.S. and Turkey for their efforts. During his remarks, Atalay emphasized the importance of the trilateral mechanism to the GoT as exhibited, he said, by the high ranking delegation he brought with him from Ankara. He highlighted recent high-level visits by Turkish officials to Baghdad and outlined the GoT's new National Unity Project.⁸ Atalay indicated that the success of the new GoT initiative would eradicate the basis for the existence of the PKK and stated that with your cooperation and help we are determined to move forward despite recent problems and trouble.⁸ Atalay noted the importance of continuing the work of the trilateral mechanism and that the Turkish side was looking forward to taking more constructive and concrete steps on this issue.⁸ In remarks referencing the impending U.S. forces withdrawal from

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Iraq, he stated that Turkey wants to increase security cooperation and coordination with Iraq.⁸

16. (C) Hamid Rashid, Secretary of the Trilateral Commission, gave a brief presentation of activities of the trilateral working group in the four months since the last ministerial meeting. The brief highlighted the number of intelligence reports given to members of the committee, two visits to the TISO to assess needs and outline a way forward and the recent assignment of a representative from the committee to visit Makhmour and assess the situation in the camp. Following this brief, Zerevani MG Delshad Othman, the KRG representative to the trilateral working group, gave a presentation on the progress of the TISO. MG Othman outlined numerous intelligence reports that have been passed to the Turkish side in the last six months.

17. (C) The discussion on Makhmour refugee camp was very brief. The Iraqis distributed an informational packet and Minister Waili stated that he hoped that there would be a clear Turkish policy on Makhmour soon. Minister Atalay responded by saying that Makhmour posed a threat to both Iraq and Turkey and cautioned that their intelligence indicated that the PKK was tightening its grip on the residents of the camp in response to the GoT's new initiative. He said that a joint Turkish-Iraqi program to allow the people in the camp to return to their homes should be established soon and that the GoT would review the new information received. (Note: Turkish Ambassador Ozcelik, in a sidebar to A/PM Counselor, made clear the GoT would accept no UN monitoring mission in Turkey to assess GoT compliance with such a plan, but it could entertain a regular GoT reporting mechanism to the UNHCR. End note.)

18. (C) Further discussion on training of Iraqi police and intelligence (as per the previous ministerial and bilateral agreements between Turkey and Iraq) and discussion on the common border, led by a briefing by the Iraqi Deputy of the Department of Border Enforcement, followed before the conclusion of the meeting. All parties agreed that there will be a working level visit to the sole common border entry point between the two countries (Ibrahim Khalil in the Iraqi side and Habur Gate on the Turkish side) in January. There

are currently two proposed dates, January 3-4 or 11-12. (Comment: The intense stares at A/PM Counselor when he raised the planned border visit from TGS representative MG Erdal Ozturk, combined with his scuppering of the last trilateral effort ten days ago to visit the border, suggests TGS will tolerate little trilateral work on non-kinetic approaches to manage the PKK issue in northern Iraq. End comment.) The purpose of the visit is to assess the point of entry on the Iraqi side and determine what steps can be taken to improve technological aspects of Ibrahim Khalil. The working level visit will likely be followed by a higher level visit with more media and political profile sometime in February or March.

VISIT TO ERBIL

¶9. (C) On December 21, the Turkish and Iraqi delegations traveled to Erbil and briefly toured the TISO before meeting with KRG President Massoud Barzani and KRG PM Barham Salih. Upon arrival, the delegations were met by KRG Minister of Interior Kamil Sinjari and Acting RRT Erbil Team Leader Steven Barneby. During the TISO visit, MG Erdal Ozturk asked the often heard Turkish refrain about what the TISO was doing to generate "real time actionable intelligence." Members of the TISO explained that current capacity did not allow for generation of that type of intelligence, however, they were working towards better communication and coordination to develop this capability. According to open sources, Barzani expressed his support for the GoT's new initiative and expressed hope that Iraq and Turkey "can play a remarkable role" in resolving the PKK issue.

COMMENT

¶10. (C) Comment: The fourth ministerial meeting of the trilateral security dialogue was hastily planned over the course of four days with numerous date and time change requests from the Turkish delegation. Due to another change in the start time of the meeting the morning it was to take place, prevented Ambassador Hill, who had planned on

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attending, from participating because he was departing post that afternoon. The push to hold the ministerial by the GoT, even under bad timing and poor planning, suggests that the trilateral meeting was not the main Turkish objective. It is clear from reporting from Embassy Ankara (ref D and F), and Atalay's recent comments to the press, that the aim of this trip was a visit to Erbil and a discussion with KRG leadership to support GoT efforts to combat the PKK directly.

On the margins of the meeting, Atalay told A/PM Counselor that the KRG had to do more to keep the Turkish opponents of the National Unity Project off balance. In light of recent events in Turkey, the closing of the DTP party for its PKK ties (ref E) and the recent killing of seven Turkish Gendarme in central Turkey by the PKK, the pressure is on the GoT to make their new initiative a success. Previously, the diplomatic side of the GoT has always been on board with the efforts of the trilateral mechanism while the TGS has always been hesitant to fully engage and impatient with progress that was anything other than "real time actionable intelligence." Now, however, it appears that the whole of government approach to combat the PKK is being adapted by much of the GoT to include kinetic options aimed at least against PKK hard-line leadership and loyalists in the Qandil mountain complex of northern Iraq. End comment.

¶11. (C) Action request: In light of renewed Turkish requests for actionable, real-time counter-PKK intelligence and active U.S.. assistance to target PKK facilities and installations in northern Iraq, Embassy Baghdad requests interagency guidance on how to proceed in trilateral discussions, including whether to advocate with KRG leaders

to provide this sort of intelligence through the trilateral mechanism to GoT authorities.

¶12. (U) U.S. Delegation:

- W.S. Reid, Acting Pol-Mil Counselor
- RDML Lothrop Little, Deputy Commanding General, TF 134
- COL Dave Thompson, CJ3, Future Operations
- Dew Tiantawach, Pol-Mil Officer

Iraqi Delegation:

- Sherwan al-Waili, Minister of State for National Security Affairs
- Labeed Abawi, Deputy Foreign Minister
- MG Hussein Ali Kamal, Deputy Minister of Interior
- MG Delshad Najeeb Othman, KRG Representative to the trilateral working group
- Note: The entire Iraqi delegation totaled 17 people. End note.

Turkish Delegation:

- Besir Atalay, Minister of Interior
 - Murat Ozcelik, Ambassador to Iraq
 - MG Erdal Ozturk, Chief of Plans and Operations, Turkish General Staff
 - Afet Gunes, Deputy Undersecretary, National Intelligence Organization
 - Aydin Sezgin, Director General of Security Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
 - Note: The entire Turkish Delegation totaled 21 people. End note.
- FORD